

# Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Exploration Center Grand Opening July 23, 2012



Photo: Mark Stover, ExpressivePhotographics.com

*The Exploration Center will highlight the unique ecosystems, marine wildlife, and human connections and impacts to the sanctuary and provide examples of the ways changes in ocean life in turn affect life on land.*

## Center Description

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries collaborated with the City of Santa Cruz and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation in a public private partnership to design and build the MBNMS Exploration Center.

Located just steps from the ocean in Santa Cruz's famed beach area, this facility hosts state-of-the-art, interactive interpretive exhibits and will serve ~150,000 visitors annually.

Visitors are encouraged to examine this remarkably productive marine environment, the issues impacting the

sanctuary and their personal roles in protecting one of our nation's ocean treasures.

The Center has a variety of exhibits, a state-of-the-art classroom, views of the ocean, administrative offices and a small theater, which will complement other visitor centers in the area. In order to avoid duplicating exhibits at other regional aquariums and science centers, most exhibits will focus on ecosystems and large themes, rather than on live animals.

Topics covered include watersheds and water quality; sanctuary geology research and monitoring and current

research on nearby Davidson seamount; family-oriented discovery areas for rocky shores, the intertidal zone and majestic kelp forests; an introduction to migratory species who depend on the sanctuary; challenging decisions involved in protecting and sustaining the world's fish stocks and the role of Marine Protected Areas; deep-sea creatures and habitat; and a conclusion area reminding visitors "This is Your Sanctuary, Treat it Gently."

The center's exhibits are designed to encourage people to be curious, ask questions, enjoy and take pride in

their sanctuary and help ensure it will be here, for generations to come.

This sanctuary project is unique to the west coast as the facility has been designed to specifically inform the general public about NOAA and the National Marine Sanctuary System using a comprehensive exhibit program in addition to its classroom space.

The Center demonstrates a commitment to sustainability, using the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) criteria. The building will achieve a LEED Gold Certification.

At a time when people are concerned about global warming and climate change, the Exploration Center will help them see the role of the ocean in this global crisis. They will better understand how human activities can cause unintended results, affecting such things as water quality, biodiversity and survival of entire species.

### Exploration Center Goals

- To protect the resources of MBNMS through education and outreach
- To create an understanding of the MBNMS resources
- To provide pre-visit orientation for visitors before accessing resource areas in MBNMS so the visit is done in a sensitive manner
- To create a sense of personal stewardship of the MBNMS and the California coastal ecosystem
- To create a link to the many regional marine education, research and resource protection agencies.

### The Center includes:

- An architecturally distinct two story LEED sustainable building overlooking the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf.
- Dynamic, interactive exhibits highlighting the sanctuary's natural resources, stressing ocean stewardship and conservation.
- Multimedia displays including a high definition theater.
- A multi-modal transportation center, on-site parking, a rail stop, bicycle facilities and pedestrian connections to the City's newly constructed central Depot Park.
- A state-of-the-art teaching classroom with lab facilities.
- Administrative offices.

For more information  
Learn more about the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Exploration Center or how you can get involved, please visit the Exploration Center website at:

<http://montereybay.noaa.gov>

### National Marine Sanctuary System

The mission of NOAA's National Marine Sanctuaries is to serve as the trustee for the nation's system of marine protected areas, to conserve, protect, and enhance their biodiversity, ecological integrity and cultural legacy.

Our national marine sanctuaries embrace part of our collective riches as a nation. Within their protected waters, giant humpback whales breed and calve their young, coral colonies flourish and shipwrecks tell stories of our maritime history.

Our nation's sanctuaries range in size from less than one square mile to over 6,000 square miles, each sanctuary is a unique place needing special protection.

Visit: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>



Pilot a remotely operated vehicle through the deep-sea exhibit.



Learn about kelp forest ecology using state of the art interactives.



Learn about tide pools and how scientists monitor change.